

THE NONAGON



FALL - 1991

NEW HAMPSHIRE NUMISMATIC ASSOCIATION

OLDE ENGLISH TOUCH PIECES

by Frederick A. Brofos

Perhaps you have a small coin lying around which you didn't like much due to a disfiguring hole in it. Yet you couldn't really discard it, as it was made of gold. You may have something more interesting than you imagined! To qualify, it should be an old English coin of a certain kind. Let us first look into the historical background of these particular coins known as "touch pieces".

In ancient times there arose a belief in the healing power imparted by a touch of the Royal Hand of the "Lord's Anointed", a superstition which became deeply rooted in the human mind. The royal power of healing by touch is said to have begun with Edward, the Confessor (1042-1066) and descended to his successors on the English throne down through the reign of Queen Anne (1702-1714). The rite was apparently suspended during the Commonwealth period, although it is mentioned that the method had been tried by the late usurper, Cromwell, but without success. Although Edward, the Confessor, did not limit his healing power to one complaint, his successors claimed the right only to heal scrofula struma. This disease was commonly known as "King's Evil" says an old writer, because the King's touch could cure it.

It became customary for a small sum of money to be given by the king to those he healed, although there is no actual evidence of this practice until the time of Henry VII. This monarch gave to each person he healed a gold coin of the period, which afterwards became known as a touch piece. The Angel-noble was the gold coin chosen to be pierced and worn around the neck of the afflicted individual. This coin bears the figure of St. Michael slaying a dragon, which was held by some to symbolize an angel exterminating disease. Others believe the coin was chosen on account of the pious motto on it.

The original latin motto is translated "Through your crucifixion save us from destruction". During Queen Elizabeth's reign it was changed to one translated "What you say has been done by the Lord and is wonderful in our eyes". After Elizabeth's reign the size of the coin was reduced and the motto "SOLI DEO GLORIA" is translated "Glory to God Alone".

An old chronicle from time of Charles II states "The giving of the gold coin or touch piece was a token of good will from His Majesty and was not supposed to be essential to the cure" For all that many of the sufferers appear to have regarded the piece as very essential to the cure, and if they happened to lose it, or perhaps having sold it, they applied for another token of "His Majesty's Good Will". So great indeed was the increase in the number of applicants that certain restrictions became necessary. It is recorded that Charles II touched 23,601 people during 1660-1664 and during 1667-1684 the number had risen to 68,506.

Several doctors of the court were appointed to insure that only those really troubled with the "Evil" could attend the ceremony and they had to submit certificates from their ministers and arrange for tickets in advance. It is said that Anne failed to receive benefits unless they had little faith. When the fortunes of Charles I decreased so he could not give away gold touch pieces, he had special coins struck for the purpose of silver, and even copper. The latter being especially rare, carried on one side a hand with the words "He touched". One might imagine that touch pieces would be easy to acquire. I have, myself, however, not found this to be the case.

Editor's note: The above article hardly qualifies as N.H. Numismatics. However, Thomas Leighton, prominent early settler of Dover, N.H. was said to be a descendent of Edward the Confessor, and my wife's children are descended from Thomas Leighton.

N. H. NUMISMATIC ASSN. MEETING
WILL BE IN NASHUA, N.H. SEPT. 28

TRI-STATE COLLECTORS' EXHIBITION
OCT. 26 & 27 IN CONCORD, N. H.

Nashua Coin Club will host the Fall meeting of New Hampshire Numismatic Assn. at 6 P.M. Saturday, Sept. 28, in Saint Philip Church Hall, Exit SW off Route 3, Everett Turnpike, 500 West Hollis St., Route 11 West, Nashua, N.H. All members are urged to attend.

The meeting will be held following the Saturday bourse of the semi-annual coin, stamp, and baseball card show sponsored by Nashua Coin Club. President Gary Galbo may be contacted at 603-891-2245 for information. A few bourse tables are still available. There will be a food concession and admission is free. Hours are 10:00 to 6:00 Saturday and 10:00 to 5 P.M. Sunday. Forty to fifty bourse tables will buy and sell coins, stamps, baseball cards, etc.

NUMISMATIC CALENDAR

Sept. 28-29 Nashua Coin Club semi-annual coin, Stamp, & baseball card show at Saint Philip Church Hall, Exit SW, Everett Turnpike

Oct. 8, Center of N.H. show, coins, stamps, etc. Holiday Inn, 700 Elm St., Manchester.
(first Sunday each month)

Oct. 20, 3rd Sunday show, Holiday Inn, Exit 4, Everett Turnpike (bigger & better)

Oct. 26-27 Tri-State Collectors' Exhibition
39 Green St., Concord, N.H. Community Ctr.

Oct. 27. Fourth Sunday Show, Holiday Inn, Portsmouth Traffic Circle.

Oct. 19-20, New England Numismatic Assn. 47th Conference & Convention, Worcester, Mass. Mt. Carmel Recreation Ctr., Exit 16 off I-290?

Sept. 26, Portsmouth, N.H. Athenaeum, Market Square (third floor above Foster's papers) Kevin Lafond will speak on Scrip of the Civil War period. Kevin has done a lot of research on these and we will publish his list of all known issues. Public is invited to above program.

The 36th annual Tri-State Collectors' Exhibition will be held in Concord Community Center, 39 Green St. (back of City Hall and police station) Concord, N. H. Saturday, Oct. 26 and Sunday, Oct. 27, from 10 A.M. to 5 P.M. An auction will be held by Fred McPhail, Keene, starting at 4:30 P.M. Saturday.

The Governor's Trophy and many other fine prizes are offered for exhibits of numismatic, philatelic, or miscellaneous categories. There is a special award for junior exhibits. The brochure listing classes and score card, etc. is available from exhibit chairman Robert I. Wester, Alton Woods Lane, Concord, N.H. 03301. His phone is (603) 226-2450. Show cases and exhibit frames are available.

Bourse chairman Ken Fancher, 14 Rosedale St., Hooksett, N.H. 03106 (603) 485-5691 had a few tables still available but expects over 30 dealer tables to be sold. They will offer coins, stamps, baseball cards, postcards, etc.

Cachet chairman Frederick Brofos, RFD 1, Box 414, Warner, N.H. 03278 has special show cachet featuring the discovery of America by the Norsemen. Wooden nickels with same theme will be available. There will be a special postal station with back issues of stamps at face value.

ANNUAL MEETING VOTED DUES CHANGES

Increased postage and other costs were reasons for members attending annual meeting last May in Nashua to vote to increase dues for regular members to \$4.00 a year for 1992 and after. Life memberships will be \$50.00 starting Jan. 1, 1992. These fees are still less than most organizations. The listing of all known Civil War scrip issued in New Hampshire will be published in coming issues along with a rarity guide. Send dues to Sam Allen, Box 1655, Dover, N.H. 03820.

The annual meeting also voted to raise the price of ads for same reasons as dues. The new rates are listed on the page with advertising. We thank our regular advertisers and ask that you mention the Nonagon when you do business with them which we hope is often. We would welcome your ad too.

NEW HAMPSHIRE NUMISMATICS

New Hampshire Merchant Scrip

By: Kevin Lafond

Rufus K. Oxford
Grocer
Portsmouth, NH

Rufus K. Oxford was born in Portsmouth, N. H. on September 28, 1822. At age 16 he went to work for Grocer Benjamin Carter Jr. as a clerk. The store was located at 2 Pleasant Street in Portsmouth. It was here that he learned his life long trade.

Around 1851 he went into the grocery business with Samuel W. Moses. The business, Moses and Oxford, was located at 14 Pleasant Street. This partnership only lasted a few years.

Subsequently, he went into business for himself and opened his own grocery store. At different times the store occupied various State Street addresses near the corner of Pleasant Street, (72 State St., 75 State St., & 78 State St.).

For three years, 1871-1873, Rufus was a clerk in Washington, D. C. During this time his son, Charles R. Oxford, operated the store with Newton Johnston using the name Oxford & Johnston. In addition, they also operated a farm. Upon Rufus' return to Portsmouth he resumed operation of the store. Charles continued the farming operation, moving his office to 43 Middle Street.

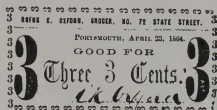
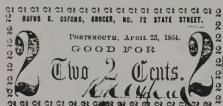
When Rufus died on April 15, 1880, his other son, Herman W. Oxford, continued the business. Herman took Milan C. Cram as his partner, changed the name of the business to Oxford & Cram, and relocated to 43 Middle Street, (the location of his brothers farming office). The partnership was dissolved by 1883 and the business closed by 1886.

Rufus Oxford was considered a shrewd businessman by his contemporaries. He had a strong business, good credit, and considerable real estate holdings. These traits and facts may partially explain why he issued merchant scrip. In addition to providing change during a coinage shortage, it also provided a medium for advertising as evidenced by the two and three cent issues of 1864. Another factor is that the issuance of scrip provided the merchant with an interest free loan. Although two cents may not seem like much, consider the fact that most merchants that issued scrip had in excess of \$300 circulating. In 1991 terms this would equate to a \$24,000 interest free loan. (This assumes a \$5.00 average weekly wage in 1864 and a \$400.00 average weekly wage today). What shrewd, or not so shrewd, merchant wouldn't jump at this opportunity!

RUFUS K. OXFORD, DEALER IN W. I. GOODS AND GROCERIES, No. 78 State Street, . . . Portsmouth, N. H. TERMS CASH.

The known notes issued by Rufus Oxford are as follows:

\$0.25	Oct. 12, 1862	
\$0.05	Nov. 1, 1862,	drawn on the Rockingham Bank
\$0.25	Nov. 1, 1862,	drawn on the Rockingham Bank
\$0.50	Nov. 1, 1862,	drawn on the Rockingham Bank
\$0.02	Apr. 23, 1864	
\$0.03	Apr. 23, 1864	



KNOWN ISSUES OF NEW HAMPSHIRE CIVIL WAR SCRP

by Kevin Lafond

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J. Jones & A. H. Sawyer (11/26/62)	\$0.10	(R6)
J. Jones & A. H. Sawyer (10/18/62)	\$0.25	(R7)
J. Jones & A. H. Sawyer (11/26/62)	\$0.25	(R6)
J. Jones & A. H. Sawyer (11/26/62)	\$0.50	(R6)

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Souhegan Bank (01/01/63)	\$0.50	(R7)

BERLIN FALLS

Moses T. Cross (No Date)	\$0.05	(R7)
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BROOKLINE

F. C. Tucker (Townsend Bank) (07/04/64)	\$0.03	(R6)
Tucker & Stiles (07/16/62)	\$0.10	(R7)
Tucker & Stiles (07/16/62)	\$0.25	(R7)

Known Issues of N. H. Civil War Scrip (continued)

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\$0.05 (R7)

George Olcott, Jr. (CT River Bank) (10/18/62)

\$0.25 (R7)

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COLEBROOK

Thomas A. Pitkin (No Date)

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R. M. Sherburne (No Date)

\$0.05 (R7)

R. M. Sherburne (No Date)

\$0.25 (R7)

R. M. Sherburne (No Date)

\$0.50 (R7)

(to be continued)

Anyone who knows of issues not listed please notify Lafond or Editor Wayne S. Rich

ADVERTISING

Advertising is accepted for the Nonagon at the following rates:

Full page ad \$20.00

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One fourth page \$7.00

Same ad may be included in three consecutive issues, Sept. Jan. and April for twice the single rate. Copy for the ads (camera ready) may be submitted to Wayne S. Rich, Box 391, Concord, N.H. 03302 by Jan. 1, Sept. 1, or Sept. 1 with check for payment to NHNA.

Our thanks to those favoring us with ads. Please mention Nonagon when responding to ads. Thanks. Those who support New Hampshire Numismatic Assn. with their ads deserve your business.

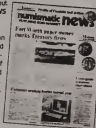
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